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Lithuanian diaspora: An interview study on the preservation or loss of Pre-World War Two traditional culture among Lithuanian Catholic Émigrés in Western Australia and Siberia, in comparison with Lithuanians in their homeland

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITHUANIA: THE EARLIEST BEGINNINGS**

## CHAPTER 2

### LITHUANIA: THE EARLIEST BEGINNINGS

An historical culture is one that binds present and future generations, like links in a chain, to all those who precede them. A man identifies himself, according to the national ideal, through his relationship to his ancestors and forebears, and to the events that shaped their character (Smith, 1979, p. 3).

Writings about nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century, the period generally recognised as the period of the birth of the concept of the modern nation state. These theories were as Smith's statement signals, engaged in establishing unbroken links and associations between the past, often a pre-historical past, and the present in order to justify contemporary political and cultural aspirations and practices. To achieve this, scholars of modern nationalism have constructed genesis narratives, which focused and often idealised the search for and construction of origins which would explain and legitimize the modern national claim to a specific geographic space and its resources, human, economic and natural.

This chapter provides a short summary of the history of the Lithuanian nation from the appearance of the first nomadic hunters who came to the areas now known as Lithuania around the tenth millennium B.C., through to the years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its collapse, the subsequent Czarist Russia occupation of Lithuania in 1795 and the origin of the Lithuanian national movement. Such a preview engages with and assesses the dominant account of Lithuanian origins as established by pre-war scholars. These scholars exemplified and repeated nineteenth century genesis narratives to build a seamless 'story' which centred these narratives as the significant and recurring patterns of Lithuanian history and culture. This construct follows what is accepted and promoted by these scholars as the organic evolution of the nation from the pre-historical past through to the twentieth century attainment of national status. The model is of the modern nation state, with its attendant political, economic and social movements, parties and governing structures.

I have carefully selected these periods and topics as I consider them to be the keys to the anthropological, social and ethnic understanding of the Lithuanian people for whom this study is concerned.

In writing this introductory overview as explained in Chapter 1, I have examined the works of scholars works of recognized historians such as Albertas Gerutis (1969), Alfred Senn (1946), Alfred Erich Senn (1959, 1966, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2001), Adolfas Šapoka (1962, 1990), Stanley Vardys (1965, 1978) who fled to the West to escape the 1940s Soviet occupations of Lithuania and all of whose views and values were formed in the period of Lithuania's first experience of modern nationhood.

I was also interested to examine the scholarship of the post-war period to assess and compare the possible differences of focus and interpretation of scholars formed by the pre-independence and first independence periods and of those who came to maturity during the decades of the second Soviet occupation from 1944 to 1991 such as Alfonsas Eidintas (1998, 2003), Jurate Kiaupienė, Zigmantas Kiaupa and Albinas Kuncevičius (2000, 2002). Most of their works were written between the period from 1991 to 2002 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its consequent withdrawal from Lithuania: One of the key historians of this period, Kiaupa Zigmantas, maintained that after WWII only a few historians remained in Lithuania and that their research and published works were restrained and censored by the Soviets (Kiaupa et al., 2002 p. 388).

Lithuania's geographic, economic and political marginality in Western consciousness and its status as part of the post-war Soviet bloc countries has not stimulated a large body of work among non-Lithuanian scholars. This lack of interest in Lithuanian history was clearly felt during the post-war period among the earlier generation of the pre-war Lithuanian intelligentsia who fled the country and saw it as an imperative to record their experiences. The next generation of Lithuanian researchers began to publish scholarly works after 1991. Their experiences formed under Soviet ideological and educational practices, differ to such an extent from the experiences of the pre-occupation period historian generations that significant differences of interpretation and evaluation had to be negotiated. Further, I have come to the view that both groups – *émigré* scholars, most of whom were living and working in the United States of America during the Cold War, and post-Soviet scholars still working in Lithuania – were limited in writing their works

due to the restrictions that applied to accessing and researching relevant documents and records.

As I have argued in my introduction, most pre-war and post-war scholars writing about Lithuania were directly associated with elements of Lithuanian culture and history as members of political diaspora. Many were formerly government or ex-government employees, officials or simply Lithuanians for whom national independence and identity were and are still relatively new experiences. In some of these works the romanticised attitude to country, land, people and language which is a recognizable stage in the development of nationalist movements is present (Smith, 1979, pp. 2-9). The Gimbutas' descriptions of the land, work and life of the Lithuanian people are a reminder that the writing of history, as much as traditions and customs, is shaped by the values and beliefs of those who collect and write it.

### **The First Inhabitants of Lithuania: The Reindeer Hunters**

The first colony of reindeer hunters in the territory of present day Lithuania made its appearance around the tenth millennium B.C. Before this period humans were not present due to inhospitable climatic and environmental conditions. In Lithuania, as in all Northern Europe, the recession of the glaciers which had impeded human settlement, lasted for some thousands of years. In the narrative of Lithuanian origins, the changes in climate and melting of the glaciers favoured the formation of the steppes, tundra and forests. It was during this period that the first solitary reindeer hunters began to appear in the summer seasons. Nomadic reindeer hunters, who came from the southwest coastal region of the Baltic Sea, were called the group of the Baltic Magdalenian culture. The hunters coming from the south were called the group of the Swiderian culture. They were believed to be the first inhabitants of the East Baltic region.

During the Mesolithic and early Neolithic periods from the eighth to the fifth millennium B.C., major climatic changes further modified the geography of the region. This facilitated the development of new cultures, the Mesolithic Nemunas in the southern part of Lithuania, and the Mesolithic Kunda in the northern part and in the remaining Eastern Baltic region. The territorial boundaries of the two cultures, according to archaeologists, could be traced along the Nemunas and Neris rivers where the hunting

and fishing tools of bows, arrows and spears have been excavated from early Mesolithic sites. During the Neolithic period the winter season became milder and the summer period longer, with the vegetation adjusting to the new environmental conditions. The presence of forests, rivers and lakes and the increasing numbers of wild animals in the region encouraged more permanent settlements rather than temporary campsites of sporadic hunters and fishermen. In the early Neolithic period, from the end of the fifth to the third millennium B.C., the Mesolithic Nemunas culture continued to evolve in the Neolithic Nemunas culture in what today is the southern part of Lithuania, the north eastern part of Poland and a large part of the territory of Byelorussia. By the late Neolithic period the Neolithic Nemunas culture covered the whole area of the middle and upper river Nemunas. In northern Lithuania the Mesolithic Kunda culture also continued to evolve in what later was named Narva culture (Kiaupa, Kiaupiene, Kuncevičius, 2000, pp. 17-21).

### **The Indo Europeans: The Balts, the Amber Collectors**

By its right shore the Swabian (Baltic) Sea washes [sic] the Aistian tribes (Aestiorum gentes), whose customs and robes are similar to those of the Swabians and languages closer to the British. ... They cultivate grains and other necessary plants more conscientiously than the lazy Germans. They search the sea, too; in shallows and on the shore they alone gather amber which they called "glesum" (Publius, Cornelius Tacitus, in Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 29).

In the late Neolithic period, the third millennium B.C., the first Indo-Europeans, the people of the Globular Amphora culture, reached the Eastern Baltic area. In the early second millennium B.C., the Corded Ware and the Boat Battle-Axes cultures were brought to the Baltic area by Indo-European tribes coming from the south and southwest (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 44). Thus these cultures converged, to form the early Baltic culture. It was in this period, according to the Lithuanian historian Jonas Puzinas that the Indo-Europeans, as a consequence of the divisions which developed in their protolanguage, began to emerge in different ethnic groups, and the Balts came into existence (Gerutis, Puzinas, Jakštas, Budreckis, 1969, p. 19).

Archaeological findings from the third to the second millennium B.C. placed settlements of the ancient Balts along the coast of the Baltic Sea, and in the lowlands along the Vistula and Nemunas rivers and their tributaries (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 13). The name *Balts* from the Latin *Mare Balticum* (Baltic Sea) was first used in 1845 by the German linguist Ferdinand Nesselmann in his work *The Old Prussian Language* to identify people speaking Baltic languages: Old Prussian, Lithuanian, Lettish (Latvian), Curonian, Senigallian, Selian and related dialects which became extinct. Lithuanian and Latvian are the only living Baltic languages (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 24).

The Baltic tribes first appear in written historical records between the first and the eleventh centuries of the Christian era (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 24). The historical references were, according to Gimbutas, so scarce for the whole of the first millennium that the life and the geographical distribution of the Balts could not be reconstructed without the presence of archaeological evidence. It is the Roman historian Tacitus, in his work *Germania* (A.D. 98), who is credited with the first written reference to these peoples, whom he named *Aestii* or *gentes Aestiorum* (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 21-24). Tacitus located the *Aestii* on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. He described them as cultivators of crops and collectors of amber. It is not clear whether he referred to all Baltic people or Old Prussians (the Western Balts) only.

In later historical records the name *Aesti* or *Aisti* appears in the writings of Jordanes, a Gothic historian of the sixth century A.D. (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 31). Jordanes placed this 'totally peaceful people' (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 21-22) to the east of the mouth of the river Vistula. The German philosopher-historian Einhard (770-840), in his work *Vita Caroli Magni*, indicated that the *Aisti* were living on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, close to the Vistula river. The Anglo-Saxon traveller Wulstan in the ninth century A.D. mentioned that along the shore of the Baltic Sea around Frisches Haff lived collectors of amber. Thus, these writings brought Gimbutas to the conclusion that the use of the name *Aisti* referred to people living in different parts of the eastern region of the Baltic Sea. Gimbutas asserts that: "it had a broader application than to a single tribe" (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 21-22).

Although information about these tribes was scarce, ancient and medieval Western Europe had an early and continuing knowledge about people living to the east of the

south-eastern shore of the Baltic Sea through their main trade-mark, amber (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 18). In his work *History of Nature* the Roman Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) recorded that after a Roman envoy returned to Rome with amber from the shores of the Baltic Sea, it was possible for the Emperor Nero to have an entire amphitheatre as well as his gladiators' military uniforms decorated with the collected amber (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 29). Kiaupa concludes that the Balts existed as an organised society, notwithstanding the lack of closer contact with the rest of Europe. Their geographical position was away from the main communication and trade routes "at the edge of the civilized world" (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 19). Gimbutas, examining the process of the formation and development of these tribes, likewise concludes that: "through the amber trade [the Balts] were linked with the culture of central and southern Europe from the time of the Bronze Age" (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 19). This reinforced her argument that in the centuries before and after the beginning of the Christian era the people called the *Aestii* had established their territory and begun to develop a distinctive culture in the area of present day Lithuania.

Archaeologists and linguists have used patterns of geographic settlements, agricultural and hunting, art, crafts and linguistic developments to conclude that the first settlements of tribes, today known as the Lithuanians, were found along the course of the Upper Nemunas and Neris rivers. They note that the name Lithuania, in Latin *Lituae*, was mentioned for the first time in the *Annales Quedlinburgeuses*, the German Quendlinburg Yearbooks, in which is described the death of the Archbishop Bruno Bonifatio, who perished on February 14, 1009 with eighteen followers at the Russian and Lithuanian border in the attempt to convert the local population to Christianity (Šapoka, 1990, p. 40). The word Lithuania took its origin from the river *Lietauka*, a tributary of the river Neris, along which most of the Baltic tribes settled and in the passing of time came to call themselves Lithuanians (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 40).

As part of this project of modern nation building archaeologists Gimbutas and Rimantienė (identified by the Lithuanian historians Kiaupa, Kuncevičius, Šapoka, and Gerutis), have argued that in the areas occupied by the Lithuanians, the presence of related tribes which merged with them, at the turn of the millennium B.C., influenced their formation. This influence would indicate, according to Kiaupa, that cultural differences and the process of ethnic assimilation associated with tribal unification

continued to persist in regions in which the inhabitants spoke a common language again marking the language and geographic positioning across time as the key factors in the development and validation of a 'nation'. (Kiaupa, 2000, p. 22), Linguists such as Puzinas and Buga argue that the Lithuanian language separated from the other Baltic languages around the seventh century B.C. to justify the existence of an independent Lithuania (Gerutis, 1969, pp. 11-13).

Gimbutas identifies the Lithuanians as a population living in permanent settlements in remote areas at the edge of forests and in the middle of a network of rivers and lakes, far from the towns and trade routes and "... not much concerned about the outer world" (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 14). Their houses were low with a thatched roof surrounded by a variety of flowers as well as oak, maple and linden trees to protect the dwelling from the wind and frost. Their collective work in the fields was followed by songs as singing was "... as necessary and as easy as breathing ... and their songs for all occasions reflect these people's feelings of kinship with mother earth and her many creatures and appreciation of her manifold gifts" (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 15). This account of Lithuanian tribal life two millennia ago in the mid-twentieth century by Gimbutas, however, slides from recording of archaeological and written material into one which inserts its own interpretative and romantic comment on that life. As these quotations show history is never written on a blank page but it formed by the needs of the generation which writes it as much as by the 'happening' of the past.

Gimbutas writes that the pagan religion was universal among the Lithuanians in the centuries before and continuing to be after the introduction of the Christianity and influenced all spheres of their life. The description of the religious practices which follows in this and in later chapters is a summary of Gimbutas's findings and interpretations. Similar accounts I have also recovered in the interviews of Lithuanians living in Lithuania and in the diaspora communities. The custom of cremation, Gimbutas notes, was maintained after the Christianity era began and was abolished only after a struggle against the practice by the Christian missionaries. Each family and house had holy groves on a hill or elevation called *alka* where members of the family and friends were cremated and votive offerings were made to the gods (Gimbutas, 1963, pp.184-193). Lithuanians believed in life after death. The *velės*, the souls of the deceased, were

believed to maintain ties with the living and to be reincarnated in trees, flowers, animals, and birds (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 184-190).

This explains the intimate relationship that most Lithuanians continued to have with particular trees. Oaks and birches, symbols of strength and agility, were associated with men's spirits, and the gentle spruce and linden with women's spirits which they believed to be reincarnated in those trees (Čepienė, 1999, pp. 55-61). For Lithuanians who held these beliefs, 'Earth is the Great Mother' (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 191), and in the accounts of Gimbutas and Čepiene, the peasants are represented as perceiving themselves and their life as part of the natural surroundings. Their close relationship with animals, birds and plants and their profound sense of veneration and respect found expressions in a belief system that associated natural elements with the image of different deities (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 204). Thus, Lithuanians honoured forest goddesses, mountain lowlands, waters, and field spirits. They worshipped springs and trees, hills and mountain slopes, all of which were attributed with magic powers. Gimbutas records as a common cultural practice the planting of a tree at the time of a birth, and notes that the cutting of that tree would cause the person's death (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 192-193). Fields and farm animals were sprinkled with water on the expectation that magic powers from the springs would ensure a good harvest and good health (Čepienė, 1999, pp. 30-31).

*Ugnis* (fire) was also significant to the early Lithuanians. It was regarded as sacred and eternal and was the symbol of happiness and purification. In each house there was a sacred hearth where the fire was always kept alive. Only on the eve of the midsummer festival, once a year, was it symbolically extinguished and then lit again. *Gabija* (the fire goddess) required offerings and it was the mother of the family's responsibility to feed and guard it overnight (Gimbutas, 1963, pp. 203-204). Gimbutas therefore has argued that although the Christian faith in Lithuania was able to infiltrate among the nobility and urban dwellers, the rural population continued to retain traces of the old pagan religion (Gimbutas, 1963, p.179).

## The Evolution of Lithuanian Culture and Language

Nationalism, the ideology and movement must be closely related to national identity, a multidimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism (Smith, 1996, p. 10).

Modern concepts of nation and national identity which developed in the nineteenth century and which are still current have centred on the identification, across broad historical periods, with land to establish and validate national claims. They also have elevated the centrality of language as a key characteristic of a nation and cultural identity.

Gimbutas claims that the Lithuanian language is “the most archaic of all living Indo-European languages” (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 37). Scholars of comparative linguistics, even before the discovery of Sanskrit in the eighteenth century, have been interested in establishing its origin. When in the nineteenth century philologists began to compare Lithuanian and Sanskrit, they discovered word similarities between the two languages. These similarities, Gimbutas stressed, were an example of the widespread dissemination of the Indo-European languages and their close interrelationship. She cites the following examples to support her view:

Dievas Davė dantis; Dievas duos duonos (Lithuanian)  
Devas adadāt datas; Devas dāt (or dadāt) dhānās (Sanskrit)  
Deus dedit dentes; Deus dabit panem (Latin)  
God gave the teeth; God will give bread (Gimbutas, 1963, p. 37).

The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) emphasised the importance of the Lithuanian language in this brief statement: “It must be preserved, for it possesses a key which solves the enigmas not only of philology, but also of tribe magistration” (Thurston, 1962, p. 3). The linguist D. Wright, in his work *Modern Philology* wrote:

Lithuanian is a language of great value to the philologists. ... It is the most antique in its form of all living languages of the world, and most akin in its substance and spirit to the primeval Sanskrit. ... It is at the same time so much like the Latin and the Greek (D. Wright in Harrison, 1948, p. 7).

The eighteenth century German nationalist philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder maintained that “language, culture, inclinations and innate or gradually developing national character as the main characteristics of a nation” (Kemiläinen, 1964, p. 40).

Herder was opposed to the establishment of large states or empires formed by different nations. Thus, philosophers and philologists argue that language and national character are the essential components which unite people to form a nation and legitimise national identity. This national identity in the case of Lithuania can be traced back to the twelfth century.

### **The Origin of the Lithuanian Nation: The Period of the Grand Dukes**

As in the case with all states which were rooted in the tribal community and whose unification was the result of gradual development, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact period of their geographical and political origin (Gerutis, et al., 1969, p. 45).

At the end of the twelfth century the consolidation of the Teutonic Order and the Order of Knights of the Sword in adjacent territories, represented a threat to the Lithuanian lands and accelerated the process of unification sought by Mindaugas. Mindaugas observed that although the Roman Catholic Church and the Teutonic Orders brought Christianisation and a new social organization to the neighbouring conquered lands, those territories remained under foreign rule. This created social conflicts between the local populations and the conquerors, who regarded the non-Germans as ‘inferior people’ (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 34-35).

Historians claim that the unification of Lithuania began in the early thirteenth century at a time when individual princes continued to rule their lands, not yet subject to any central sovereign (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 51). Foreign threats and increasing isolation from the rest of Europe led them towards the organization of a unified state under Mindaugas. The process of unification was completed by the fourth decade of the thirteenth century. After Mindaugas’ baptism in 1251, Lithuania was recognised a Christian Kingdom and two years later in 1253 Mindaugas was crowned King of Lithuania (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 35-38).

Kiaupa maintained that Mindaugas’ baptism was a political manoeuvre to secure European and Papal recognition of Lithuania. Thus, while the ruling and urban classes adopted Christianity, the peasantry resisted any form of religious change and after Mindaugas’ assassination in 1263, the country reverted to paganism. This reversion did

not mean dissolution of the kingdom over which Mindaugas had ruled for twenty years. The refusal to accept Christianity resulted in an outbreak of attacks from the Teutonic Order which contributed again to political and cultural isolation from the rest of Europe (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 43). At the end of the thirteenth century the Grand Duke Gediminas, the first sovereign of the Gediminians dynasty that would rule until 1440, consolidated the boundaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and founded in 1323 the city of Vilnius, the present capital of Lithuania (Šapoka, 1990, pp. 75-76).

By the early 1380s for the ruler Jogaila and his cousin Vytautas, (the grandsons of Gediminas) the acceptance of Christianity and the alliance with Poland represented a political solution to control the internal and external instability of the Grand Duchy and the opportunity to regain its recognition in Europe (Kiaupa et al., 2000, pp. 127-129). On August 14, 1385 the union between the two countries was sealed by the Act of Kreva, which sanctioned Jogaila's marriage to Jadwiga, the daughter of King Louis d'Anjou of Hungary and Poland and heiress to the Polish throne. Jogaila and the Lithuanian population had to accept being baptized in the Roman Catholic rite and becoming Polish allies against the Teutonic Order. Kiaupa records that:

Early in 1386, Polish envoys brought him recognition as King. Jogaila entered Cracow with his escort, was baptized, acquired the name Wladislaw, married Jadwiga, was crowned King of Poland on March 4, 1386, and signed a personal union between Lithuania and Poland (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 73-74).

According to Alfred Erich Senn this union meant the conversion of Lithuanians to Catholicism and the Polonization of Lithuanian nobility both relevant factors in the development of Lithuanian cultural identity and nationhood (Senn, 1998, p. 4).

The establishment of the Catholic Church in the Grand Duchy was supported by its rulers. The first parishes and Catholic churches were built in Vilnius. In 1387 Jogaila granted privileges to the Bishop of the diocese of Vilnius and also its inhabitants and to the Catholic Lithuanian nobility. The church received part of the city of Vilnius with approximately fifty villages and land estates which were exempt from taxes. The clergy enjoyed legal immunity. The rights of partial immunity were granted to the nobility with property rights to all estates and land and the right to dispose of them. However, they still had to pay land taxes to the sovereign. Vilnius became the first town in the Grand

Duchy where inhabitants were granted self-government. Jogaila's privileges were maintained by succeeding Grand Dukes. This contributed to the emergence of a privileged class of clergymen led by Polish priests, able to extend their hierarchy throughout the country, while the nobility grew stronger in privileges and in concessions. The Lithuanian peasantry had to embrace Catholicism, taught by Polish priests in a language not understood by the peasants. Thus, despite public observance of Catholic rites, they continued to retain their pagan beliefs, which survived and still emerged in all aspects of rural life through the celebration of rites and festivals (Kiaupa et al., 2000, pp. 123-126).

The Jagellonian dynasty ruled Lithuania and Poland from 1385 to 1572. In 1410 during the joint rule of Jogaila and Vytautas the Teutonic Order was defeated in the historic Battle of Tannenberg (Šapoka, 1990, pp. 127-129). The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, no longer threatened from the west, could pursue further expansion. By 1420, due to the political and military ability of Vytautas, who effectively ruled Lithuania while Jogaila nominally retained the crown but focussed his attentions on Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became the largest and the most powerful state in the region. It covered the area from the shores of the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea (Kiaupa, et, al., 2000, pp. 200-203). As a consequence of this effective kingship in 1430 Vytautas was offered the crown of Lithuania. Vytautas' death on October 27, 1430 prevented him from ascending to the throne. His death brought an end to the Gediminas dynasty and his successors established the Jogaila dynasty: Lithuanian in origin but Polish in orientation. The century following Vytautas' death was a period of consolidation of the Lithuanian State and led to the promulgation in 1529 of the First Statute of Lithuania, a common code of written laws for the whole territory on the model of Roman laws. This statute replaced the norms of customary and written laws which differed throughout the territory; and it defined the political and administrative position of the *bajoras* (gentry) and their estates in the Grand Duchy (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 97).

After the First Statute, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became closer to Western Europe for its social structures and acceptance of Christianity. In the following century its socio-economic and cultural life continued to evolve. The Lithuanian nobility was attracted to the Polish culture for the freedom and the privileges granted to its nobility. Thus, they welcomed the introduction of the Polish coat of arms, language and institutions. These

changes were influenced also by an economic growth, associated with the increasing power of the nobility and by the Reformation in 1520. The Grand Duchy, throughout the sixteenth century, developed a strong economy, based on exports of timber, grain, linen and kemp to Western Europe. This had an immediate effect on the rural areas where new towns and villages were built. The *bajoras* (gentry), an independent class of landowners, demanded equality with the nobility. It was granted to them at the turn of the sixteenth century, by Casimir, the successor of Vytautas. The nobility and the gentry became the leading economic class in the Grand Duchy; the peasantry remained the lowest class. The peasants were restricted in their privileges and most of them depended upon the landowners for their survival (Gerutis, et al., 1969, p. 68).

Closer ties to the West brought the teaching of Martin Luther into the Grand Duchy. The Reformation came to the Grand Duchy in two waves. The beginning was supported by the most educated gentry and later by the nobility, especially Radvilas's cousins. The first sermons in the spirit of the Reformation were preached in Vilnius in 1525. In 1547 the first book *The Catechism* was published in the Lithuanian language by Martinas Mazvydas (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 131). Political ties with Poland swayed Lithuanian nobility towards Calvinism. Once the nobility had accepted Calvinism, the peasants were forced to follow their example. Their economic and legal situation which made them dependant upon the nobility did not allow otherwise. The peasants were ordered by the nobility to attend Calvinist services just as they had previously attended services under Catholicism, another religion imposed by the Poles. Often the same churches were used because the nobility, exercising their rights of patronage, frequently changed these churches, once taken from the Catholic hierarchy, into Calvinist prayer houses. The Catholic priests were either removed from their posts or had to serve the new religion. Previously under Catholicism, the Polish influence filtered now into Lithuania under Calvinism. The Radvilas and most of the nobility supported Calvinist scholars from Poland to give lectures and to disseminate religious publications in Latin and Polish language (Kiaupa et al., 2000, pp. 175-177).

In 1566 the Second Statute was promulgated. It regulated the position of the gentry and the nobility in the government of the Grand Duchy. The nobility were to renounce all their legal privileges and form one legal and administrative body with the gentry, based on equality of political and legal rights. This Statute gave further evidence of the

growing sense of Lithuanian statehood and functioned as a significant marker of the status sought by Lithuanians as an independent state. It opened a new period in the history of Lithuania, influenced by Poland (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 126-127).

In 1569 the Jesuit Order arrived in Vilnius to launch a programme of educational and religious propaganda to revive Catholicism among the nobility and the Lithuanian population. The Catholic Church was supported by the power of the Grand-Dukes and the authority of the Jesuit Order through laws and diets' edicts. The nobility lacked deep religious conviction and the rest of the population reverted to the Catholic religion. The Protestant reform did not succeed because the Grand-Dukes, the only authority in the country with the power to establish Protestantism as a State religion, supported Catholicism.

### **The Lublin Treaty: The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569)**

A new stage in the history of the Lithuanian State was marked, in July 1569, by the Lublin Union Treaty between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. According to this treaty, Lithuania and Poland agreed to the formation of a Commonwealth under an elective monarchy with a common ruler. Each member state retained its name, separate territory, government, army, laws, and currency (Gerutis, 1969, p. 81). The new Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, with a population of approximately 7.5 million inhabitants, became one of the largest states in Europe in size (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 226). However, in the second half of the sixteenth century this Commonwealth, with a sovereign who ruled two countries, was in opposition to the centralized national states that started to emerge with a strong government in the rest of Europe.

In a century dominated by a series of significant political developments and statutes, the establishment in 1579 of Vilnius University by the Jesuit Order was the most significant event in the cultural life of Lithuania. The university fostered European culture and became the cultural focus of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Literature and science developed up to the middle of the seventeenth century, bringing cultural life of the Grand Duchy to the same level of other countries in Western and Central Europe. However, in 1773, Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Jesuit Order. In 1781 the

University of Vilnius became a secular institution. The Polish language was adopted as the language of instruction. In time the university led the political formation and development of Lithuanian nationalism (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 158).

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century the nobility with their large estates were the only power recognized within the Grand Duchy. These noblemen were speaking and writing in Polish, while continuing to call themselves Lithuanians, a term with very clear political and cultural meanings attached to it. The adoption of the Polish language by the nobility and the clergy represented a changed political reality but increased the divisions between the ruling classes and the land-based peasantry. The nobility and the gentry demanded also the power of the *Liberum veto* or unanimous voting in the Parliament to change any rights of ownership of land and personal rights enshrined in the Third Statute of Lithuania (1588).

In the seventeenth century the *Liberum veto* began to restrict the work of the Lithuanian Parliament and undermine the cohesion and long-term stability of the Commonwealth (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 169). From 1573 to 1763 there were 137 Parliaments of the Commonwealth, but 53 could not complete their work (Kiaupa et al., 2000, p. 259). This internal friction and instability as well as the continuous demands by both the Polish and Lithuanian nobility to increase their privileges and concessions could not save the Commonwealth, even though reforms were undertaken at the end of the eighteenth century. Thus, the expansionist policies of Russia, Austria and Prussia converted into successful invasions of the Commonwealth territory in 1772 and 1793. In 1795 the Commonwealth was divided, losing the last of its political and cultural autonomy. Lithuania became absorbed into Russia (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 223-224).

The collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth changed the political status of Lithuania. The Lithuanian territory acquired by Russia through the third Polish-Lithuanian partition in 1795 was reorganized into administrative units. In 1796 the Russian authorities created the *Litovskaya Gubernya* (the General Lithuanian Province) from the Gubernias of Vilnius and Slomin (Eidintas, Žalys, Senn, 1998, p. 11). In 1801 the territory was divided again into two separate gubernias, Vilnius and Grodno, and in 1843 into a third gubernia, Kaunas. By the mid-nineteenth century the General Gubernia of Vilnius included the Gubernia of Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno and Minsk (Kiaupa, 2002,

p. 224). The administrative units covered approximately 120,000 square kilometres with a population of 2.5 million of which 1.6 million were ethnic Lithuanians. Another 100,000 ethnic Lithuanians lived under German rule in Lithuanian Minor known as Northern East Prussia (Eidintas, et al., 1996, p. 11). Although their boundaries were not drawn along ethnic lines, the Gubernia of Vilnius and Kaunas were in Lithuanian territory and those of Grodno and Minsk were in Byelorussia. In 1795 part of the Lithuanian territory on the left bank of the Nemunas River was acquired by Prussia, to form the territory of the Gubernia of Eastern Prussia.

In 1807, this territory, in the course of the Napoleonic wars, was occupied by the French and it became part of the newly established Duchy of Warsaw. The Napoleonic Code of civil law was introduced. According to the Code, serfdom was abolished and the former serfs were given personal rights equal to those of the gentry (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 224-229). However, peasants were not in title of any land concession and most of them were forced to remain economically bound to the landowners. Although they were allowed to rent and buy land, such purchases were virtually impossible to attain. A new class of free peasants emerged, in this area, while in Russian Lithuania serfdom continued until 1861 (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 242).

In 1815 under the terms of the Treaty of Vienna, the Duchy of Warsaw entered into the sphere of the Russian Empire and was transformed into the Independent Kingdom of Poland under Czar Alexander I. In 1867 it was renamed Suvalki Gubernia. The historian Jakštas argues that the establishment of free peasants in Suvalki Gubernia, which was attached to the Duchy of Warsaw, may explain the reason for “the cultural lead of the people” in the national movements of Lithuania in the nineteenth century (Gerutis, et al., 1969, p. 111). The Czech historian Miroslav Hroch claims that the roots of the national movement in Lithuania have to be found in the northern part of the district of Suvalki Gubernia, the region in which serfdom had been abolished and where the subsequent increase in personal and political rights and consciousness provided the conditions which enabled the formation of a nationalist movement (Hroch, 1985, p. 94).

### **Revival of National Identity: Theorising the Process**

We cannot understand nations and nationalism simply as an ideology or form of politics but must treat them as cultural phenomena as well. That is to say, nationalism, the ideology and movement must be closely related to national identity, a multidimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism (Smith, 1996, p. 10).

Hroch's theory of the three phases in the history of national movements in European nations enables one to gain a better understanding of Lithuanian nationalism. Hroch counts as phase A a period of scholarly interest and exploration of the culture of a nation. Phase B is a period of political agitation during which intellectuals promote a national awareness amongst the population whose national culture they have been investigating. Finally, phase C is a period that witnesses the emergence of a mass nationalist movement (Hroch, 1985, pp. 86-87).

Hroch describes the Lithuanian nationalist movement as a 'belated' type and chronologically frames it into three separate phases, spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the classic period of nationalist ideological formation. Phase A, he argues, lasted from 1820 to 1870, when a scholarly interest was developing in the exploration of Lithuanian national culture. Eric Hobsbawm emphasises that "Europe was swept by the romantic passion for the pure, simple and uncorrupted peasantry and for this folkloric rediscovery of the people" (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 103). Phase B, from 1870 to 1905 according to Hroch, was a period of patriotic agitation when intellectuals promoted national awareness among the peasantry. Phase C, he argues, began in 1905 with the emergence of a mass national movement in the country at a point when Czarist authority was weakened and diverted by the need to respond to its own internal crisis (Hroch, 1985, pp. 86-95). According to Hobsbawm this is the period in which the national idea has been mastered by a population that begins openly to support it (Hobsbawm, 1985, p. 180). Hroch's theory of nationalism could be applied to the national movements in Lithuania if we explore step by step its development.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, concepts of liberalism and freedom, and nationalistic ideas were widespread throughout Europe, influenced by the echoes of the French Revolution and the writings of the philosophers Rousseau, Montesquieu, Burke and Herder (Smith, 1979, p. 158). In Lithuania, Vilnius University became the centre to

infuse the feeling of new democracy and of liberalism. It also fostered nationalistic ideas, and encouraged The Lithuanians to become aware of their present status and their historical past. The growing feelings of nationalism and resistance to the Czarist rules led to a revolt by a group of 400 students who joined the insurgents in the uprising of 1831, in the outskirts of Vilnius. After successfully suppressing of the uprising the Czarist authority closed in 1832 the University of Vilnius, the only institution of higher learning in Lithuania (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 237).

In 1840 the use of the name 'Lithuania' was forbidden. It was referred to as the *Severo Zapadni Krai*, the north-western territory of the Russian Empire (Vardys, Sužiedelis, Ivinskis, Remeikis, Zundė, Vaitiekūnas, Grinius, Vigneri, 1965, p. 6). The sixteenth century Statutes of Lithuania (promulgated in 1529, 1566 and 1588) according to which the Lithuanians had ruled themselves for centuries, were abolished and replaced by Russian law (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 236). Despite mass arrests of dissidents and the transfer of Vilnius University faculties to the Kiev and St. Petersburg universities, the nationalist feelings fostered by the Vilnius University were kept alive by the intelligentsia of the country.

This is visible in the work of Simonas Daukantas. As a student of history at the University of Vilnius, he continued his studies in Königsberg and St. Petersburg. He was the first Lithuanian historian who began to formulate the modern concept of ethnic Lithuania in his book *History of Lithuanian*, in Lithuanian language. His book was not published until 1845 (Gerutis et al., 1969, pp. 113-117).

The uprising from 1830 to 1831 was the first joint resistance of Lithuanians and Poles to the oppressive Czarist occupation since the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Thus, it can be argued that the nineteenth century was a period of struggle for the restoration of the statehood, development and modernisation of the Lithuanian nation and the period of modern nationalist revival. Formulating new political ideas of an independent political existence separated from both Russia and Poland, the Lithuanian nation gradually became a modern nation oriented to the ethnic territory of Lithuania. Values preserved in the sub-culture of the Lithuanian peasants now became the key

social factors in a Lithuanian nationalist movement founded on and promoting the ideal of an ethnic and largely rural Lithuania. The view that Lithuania Minor, which was then part of Germany, should be recognized as part of ethnic Lithuania also gained widespread support among intellectuals.

## **Conclusion**

By the end of the nineteenth century Lithuanian nationalism had already established a base, albeit limited, within an academic core group. This would spread throughout the wider Lithuanian population by the end of the twentieth century, as explained in the next chapter.